The Effective Use of Web Conferencing to Provide Flexible Learning: the Learners’ Perspective

Recommendations

1. Prepare learners for learning in the virtual classroom
2. Establish commonly accepted etiquette with learners for working online, and adopt a set of protocols to facilitate communication
3. Use icebreakers to welcome learners and to familiarise them with the web conferencing tools they will need to use
4. Use breakout rooms to facilitate small group activities
5. Provide a variety of activities to meet different learning preferences
6. Foster student-tutor and student-student relationships throughout a course
7. Consider ways to identify and manage those who participate minimally
8. Choose how to use the media at your disposal to suit the situation – video, audio and chat can be used separately or in combination
9. Reassure, encourage, keep things simple

It creates a level of stress that possibly you [tutors] aren’t aware of

Don’t put me on the spot with an academic question, my mind goes blank

Respect learners’ privacy

I don’t like giving out personal information in a public forum, e.g. what I did on my holidays...I felt under pressure to join in and this turned me off in terms of participation

Respecting Diversity

It gives an opportunity to ask questions when the tutor ‘pops in’ [to a breakout room] if anyone is nervous about that kind of thing

It was just annoying

I think [allowing participants to move themselves to rooms] gives participants autonomy...to know that you can do that yourself, instead of someone taking you

Minimalists

There were some people...they didn’t seem to want to participate

Be aware that those who participate minimally have a negative effect on their peers and consider ways to manage this

Allow learners to move themselves in and out of rooms as appropriate / Facilitate group work by moving between the rooms judiciously

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